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(54) Abstract Title

Shower head for plasma etching and chemical or vapour deposition

(57) The shower head 18 has a gas outlet plate 23 with concentric outlets 34-36 fed with different gases from plenum chambers 24-26 defined by baffle plates 21,22. The plenum chambers 24-26 are fed with gas from respective inlets 27-29.

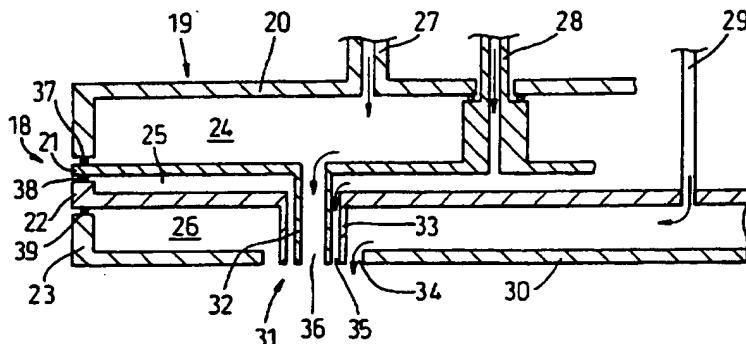


Fig. 2

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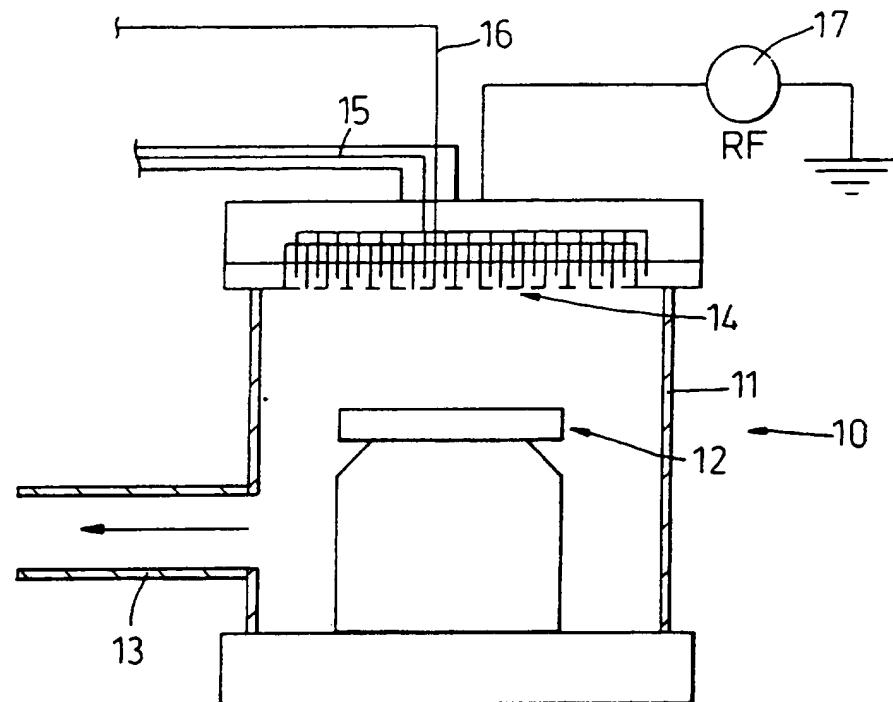


Fig. 1

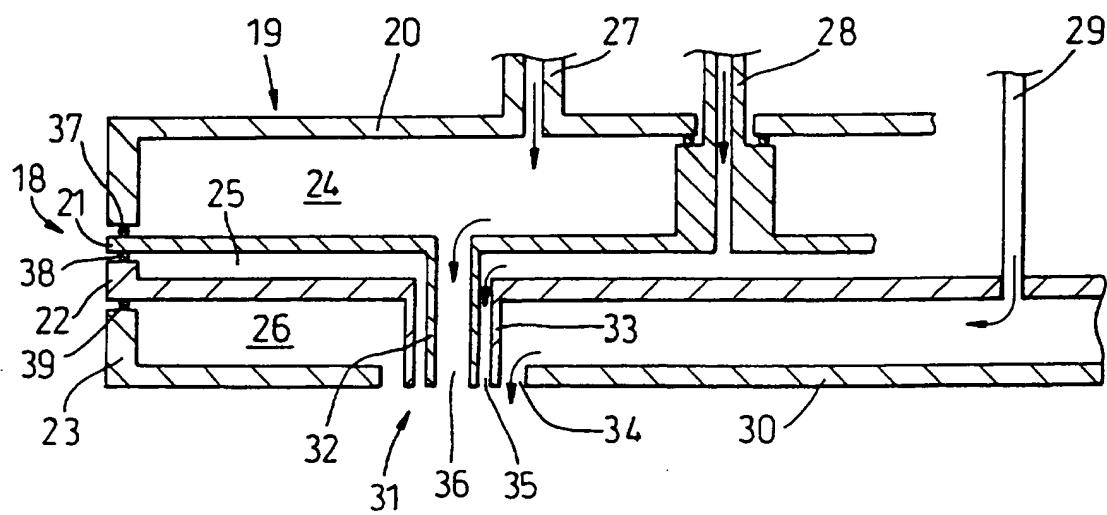


Fig. 2

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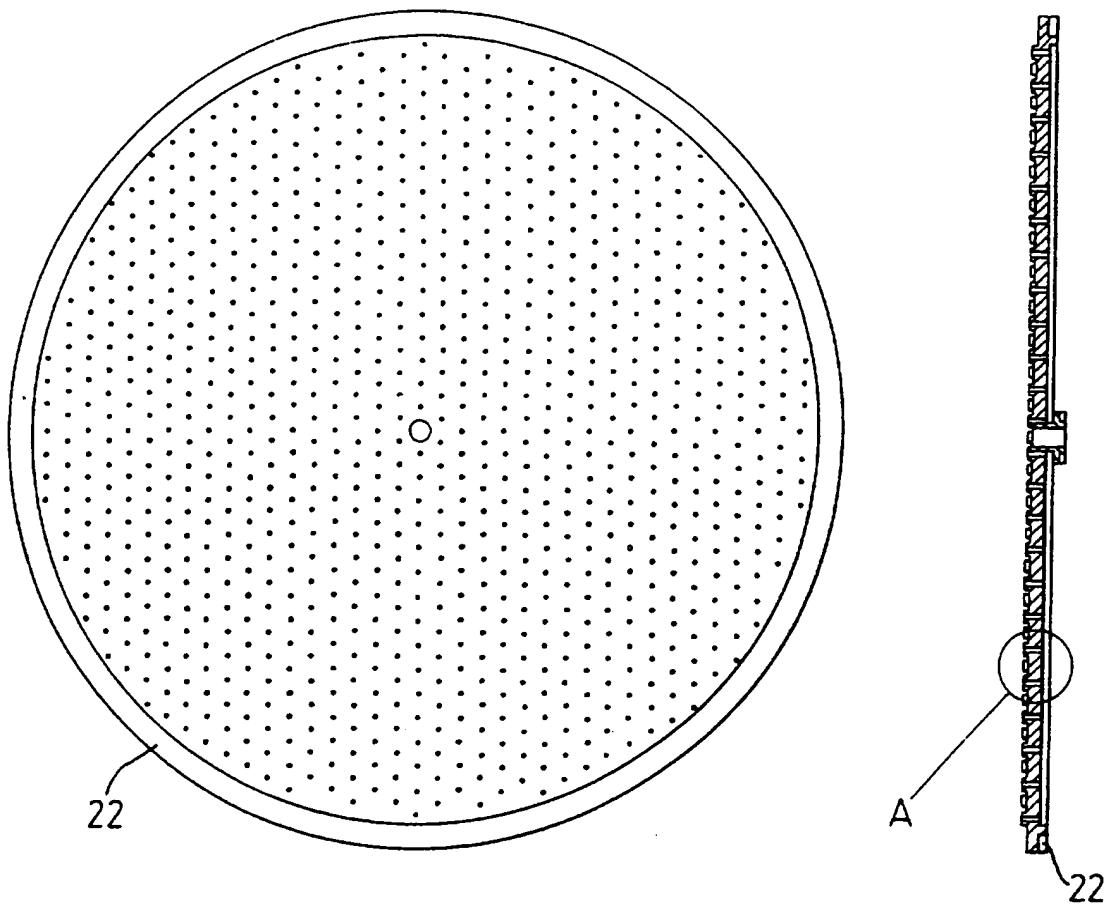


Fig. 3

Fig. 4

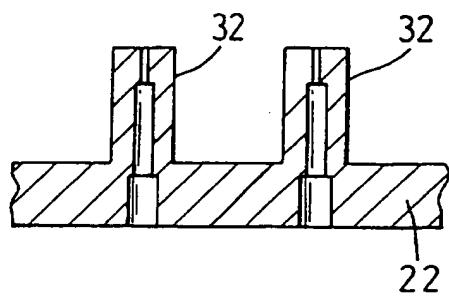


Fig. 5

Shower Head

This invention relates to shower heads for delivering gases to reactor chambers.

In many processes, such as plasma etching, chemical vapour deposition and plasma enhanced vapour deposition, it is desirable to introduce into a reactor chamber two or more gases or vapours relatively evenly throughout the chamber. This is generally achieved by a device known as a shower head and typically these comprise a casing defining a volume and having an outlet plate defining a plurality of openings. However in some processes it is necessary to deliver the gases or vapours in such a way that the gases are delivered, but not mixed until they enter the chamber. This is frequently achieved by a baffle plate that extends across the volume defined by the showerhead casing to define first and second gas plena on respective sides thereof. The first plenum is on the outlet side of the baffle plate and is essentially defined between a series of tubes, which project downwardly from the baffle plate to communicate the second plenum (on the other side of the baffle plate) with the openings in the outlet plate. An apertured rubber gasket is provided between the outlet plate and the ends of the tubes to seal the passages defined by the tubes from the first plenum. Where a tube engages the rubber gasket, gas can pass through the openings in the gasket and the aligned openings in the outlet plate. The other openings in the gasket serve to communicate the first plenum with their

associated openings in the outlet plate.

This design creates a number of problems. Firstly the gasket must be accurately matched up to the holes in the outlet plate and a certain pressure is need to maintain a seal between the outlet plate and the gasket. It is preferred that the outlet plate is made with aluminium, because it is suitable for many processing reasons, but aluminium is relatively flexible and it has become progressively more difficult to maintain a good seal as shower head dimensions have increased along with the increase in the dimensions of the wafers to be processed. Attempts to overcome these problems using fastenings have disrupted the continuous surface of the outlet plate and are potential sources of contamination, particle generation and lack of uniformity of processing. Further on occasions a plasma can ignite within the cavities of the shower head causing damage to the gasket and plasma activity can react with any iron-based fastenings within the shower head causing contamination.

The present invention consists in a shower head for delivery unmixed gases or vapours to a reactor chamber including a casing defining a volume and having an outlet plate defining a plurality of openings and a baffle plate extending across the volume to define first and second gas plena on respective sides thereof, the first plenum being on the outlet side of the baffle plate and the baffle plate having projecting tubes passing through the first plenum to communicate with respective openings, characterised in the

that the tubes project into the plenum to define, with respective openings, circumjacent outlets for the first plenum.

Preferably the first plenum is in direct communication
5 with the circumjacent outlets.

The shower head may further include a further baffle plate located on the other side of the second plenum from the first baffle plate to define with the casing, or an extension thereof, a third plenum, the further baffle plate
10 having further tubes which extend through respective ones of the first sets of tubes to form further outlets.

Preferably the areas of the tube outlets and the circumjacent outlets are substantially equal and the outlets in each group of outlets may be concentric.

15 It will be understood that in fact, in principle, a number of baffle plates can be used to define a number of plena and in each case their tubes will extend downwardly through the tubes of the intermediate baffle plates. Clearly the number of tubes which can accommodated while
20 still providing outlets of acceptable dimensions is limited, but the precise limitations will depend on the dimensions of the outlet plate and the openings therein.

Although the invention has been defined about it is to be understood that it includes any inventive combination of
25 the features set out above or in the following description.

The invention may be performed in various ways and a specific embodiment will now be described, by way of example with reference to the accompanying drawings in which:

Figure 1 is a schematic view of a plasma reactor chamber with a traditional shower head diagrammatically illustrated;

Figure 2 is a scrap cross-sectional view through part 5 of a shower head made in accordance with the invention. The drawing is not to scale; and

Figure 3 is a view from below of a baffle plate for use in a 'two gas' version of a shower head;

Figure 4 is a cross-section through the plate of Figure 10 3 and

Figure 5 is an enlarged detail of A in Figure 4.

A plasma reactor chamber, generally indicated at 10, comprises a chamber 11, a workpiece support 12, a vacuum pump outlet 13, a shower head 14, first and second gas supplies 15 and 16 and an RF power source 17, which is connected to the shower head 14, which acts as an electrode for striking the plasma.

The shower head 14 is essentially as described in the preamble to this specification and it delivers the gases 20 supplied by 15 and 16 in an unmixed state to the chamber 11. A plasma is struck and the desired process is carried out on a wafer supported on the support 12.

Referring now to Figure 2 the Applicant's shower head is generally indicated at 18 and comprises a casing 19, 25 which includes a backing plate 20, first and second baffle plates 21, 22 and an outlet plate 23. The baffle plates 21 and 22 divide the volume defined by the casing 19 into plena 24, 25 and 26. A gas supply 27 feeds the plenum 24; a gas

supply 28 feeds the plenum 25 and a further gas supply 29 feeds the plenum 26.

The outlet plate 23 has an array of openings across its face 30 and one of this is illustrated at 31.

5 Each of the baffle plates 21 and 22 has a tube for each opening 31. The tubes 32 from plate 21 descend down through the tubes 33 from plate 22 and each of these tubes project into the opening 31, or into the region thereof, so that the outer tube 33 defines a circumjacent outlet 34 with the
10 opening 31.

The result of this configuration is respective concentric outlets 34, 35 and 36 which are respectively and separately connected to the plena 26, 25 and 24. Thus gases supplied to inlets 27, 28 and 29 are delivered into the
15 chamber 11 across the face 30 and in a unmixed state prior to their introduction into the chamber 11.

As can be seen the baffle plates 21 and 22 are simply sandwiched, using O rings 37 to 39, between the backing plate 20 and the outlet plate 23.

20 The new design has a number of significant advantages. First it gets rid of the need for the rubber gasket and the difficulties of construction and assembly, as well as those of use as mentioned above. Secondly, because it is no longer necessary to provide a seal with that gasket, the
25 flexibility of the opening plate 30 no longer becomes a significant issue. Further the design allow more than two gases to be mixed and by having a supply of baffle plates, various configurations can be swiftly made up. Thus for

example it is possible, by selecting different baffle plates with different tube dimensions to vary the relative dimensions of the outlet 34, 35 and 36 and hence, if the gas pressures are equal to define the relative flow rates of the
5 gases. The use of concentric tubes is particularly convenient, but it would be feasible to utilise side by side tubes, provided that suitable seals enable such tubes to pass through intermediate baffle plates without allowing gas mixing.

10 Figures 3 to 5 illustrate the actual construction of a baffle plate suitable for use in a two gas version of the shower head. The construction of tubes 32 is particularly illustrated.

Claims

1. A shower head for delivering unmixed gases or vapours to a reactor chamber including a casing defining a volume and having an outlet plate defining a plurality of 5 openings and a baffle plate extending across the volume to define first and second gas plena on respective sides hereof, the first plenum being on the outlet side of the baffle plate and the baffle plate having projecting tubes passing through the first plenum to communicate with the 10 respective openings characterised in that the tubes project into the first plenum to define, with respective openings, circumjacent outlets for the first plenum.

2. A shower head as claimed in claim 1 wherein the first plenum is in direct communication with the 15 circumjacent outlets.

3. A shower head as claimed in claim 1 or claim 2 further including a further baffle plate located on the other side of the second plenum from the first baffle plate to define with the casing or an extension thereof a third 20 plenum, the further baffle plate having further tubes which extend through respective ones of the first set of tubes to form further outlets.

4. A shower head as claimed in any one of the preceding claims wherein the areas of the tube outlets and 25 the circumjacent outlets are substantially equal.

5. A shower head as claimed in any one of the preceding claims wherein outlets in each group of outlets

are concentric.



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Claims searched: 1-5

Examiner: Graham Russell
Date of search: 12 November 1998

Patents Act 1977
Search Report under Section 17

Databases searched:

UK Patent Office collections, including GB, EP, WO & US patent specifications, in:

UK Cl (Ed.P): B6J (JMX); C7F (FHB, FHE)

Int Cl (Ed.6): C23C 16/44; H01J 37/32

Other: Online: EPODOC, WPI

Documents considered to be relevant:

Category	Identity of document and relevant passage	Relevant to claims
A	GB 2219311 A (VEB) see Fig 2	1
A	EP 0687749 A1 (THOMAS SWAN) see Fig 3	1
A	DE 4035951 C1 (ABB PATENT) see WPI abstract Acc No 91-165304 & Fig 2	1
A	US 5595606 (TOKYO ELECTRON) see Fig 1	1

X	Document indicating lack of novelty or inventive step	A	Document indicating technological background and/or state of the art.
Y	Document indicating lack of inventive step if combined with one or more other documents of same category.	P	Document published on or after the declared priority date but before the filing date of this invention.
&	Member of the same patent family	E	Patent document published on or after, but with priority date earlier than, the filing date of this application.